The Alaska Pirate

By Charles E. Brimblecom.

LATE in the summer of 1897 I arrived in San Francisco seeking my fortune. For many days I vainly asked for employment as a salesman, bookkeeper or bank clerk, for I felt competent for almost anything, having just graduated from the high school. The small sum of money I possessed began to shrink alarmingly, and my gorgeous dreams to wear a sickly and faded hue.

One day while walking one of the principal streets I saw in gilt letters on the upper windows of a large building the words: "Detective Agency." A brilliant thought came to me, putting to flight my temporary discouragement.

I climbed two flights of stairs and arrived at a glass door, on which was inscribed: "Chief's office. Walk In." I entered. A short man with a gray mustache stood beside a large office desk. He looked at me inquiringly.

"I wish to see the chief," I said.

"What do you want to see him for?" he asked, with a perceptible Irish accent.

"I would like to get employment as a detective," I replied.

"I'm the chief," he said. "But you're almost too young for the business, me boy. It takes expayrience, and plenty of sand, and often a handy knowledge of gun fighting to be a detective."

"I wish you'd try me, sir," I said, courageously. "I'm young, but I can learn."

"True enough," he assented. "Well, I don't mind giving you a little trial. Are you willing to take your life in your hand, me boy?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, seriously, trying to avoid turning pale.

"Very well," he said, approvingly. "Now, of course, you've heard all about the Klondike gold mines. They're very rich, and the steamers that come from there are every one of them loaded with gold—millions and millions of dollars. Now, there are train robbers on the land, and there are pirates on the sea, and what finer haul for a pirate, do you think, than one of those Alaska steamers loaded down with gold dust and nuggets?

"I suspect that there's a bloody band of pirates fitting out an expedition right here in San Francisco for the purpose of capturing some of those steamers. I want you to go out and discover them if you can. Find out where their vessel is and how big a crew she carries, and all about it. One false move, and likely as not you'll be found floating in the bay to-morrow. Good-by, and good luck to you."

I walked along the wharves very much on the alert. I examined two vessels that were loading for the north, but everything about them seemed honest and commonplace. I continued my patrol, and at last, at a small, remote wharf, I found a steam schooner bound for Alaska. Her name was the Gadfly, and I learned that she was to sail that very afternoon.

Something about the craft, I do not know why, aroused my suspicions. The sailors were as busy as ants loading provisions and stores. I approached and tried to engage one of them in conversation, but he repulsed me in a rude and surly manner. A large new deckhouse had been built on the schooner, evidently to accommodate quite a number of men.

Even at that retired place there were a few idlers gazing and gossiping. I joined them, and sat down on an overturned boat, determined to watch everything that occurred. The first confirmation to my suspicions came from two roughly dressed men who paused near me.

"They say the Gayfly is going to Copper river," said one, with a kind of sneer. "They can tell that to the marines."

"Naw!" replied his companion. "She draws too much water. She couldn't git within 20 miles of the mouth."

In an hour or two some heavy cases were brought down and carefully hoisted on board. They were marked "Mining Machinery," but from their appearance I suspected that they contained cannon.

Among the passengers I saw a boy about my own age. He wore a fur cap and a heavy woolen coat of Arctic cut. He carried a rifle on his shoulder, and a big revolver and sheathknife in his belt A large shaggy black dog kept at his heels.

Several times one of the officers had come on the wharf and looked up toward the city with an air of impatience. I resolved to wait until I discovered what this person or thing was.

Between 10 and 11 o'clock a heavy truck came rolling ponderously down the wharf. It was loaded with large barrels, about 30 of them. I heard sharp, suppressed orders on the Gadfly, and instantly the sailors swarmed out on the wharf and began to unload the barrels and roll them on board with every appearance of apprehensive haste, urged on by the profane mate. In my eagerness I walked boldly among them.

"What is in those barrels?" I asked a perspiring sailor.

"Gunpowder, sonny," he growled, as he hurried away.

But the mate's blodshot eyes had spied me. He caught me by the shoulder and sent me staggering backwards.

"You git out of here!" he snarled.

I deemed it prudent to retire, especially as I had discovered what the barrels contained. What would a mere peaceable passenger vessel do with 30 barrels of gunpowder? I set out at full speed for the detective agency.

When I entered the chief's office another man was seated at the desk—a large, dignified gentleman, with gray side whiskers.

"I wish to see the chief," I said, breathlessly.

"I am the chief," he replied. "What do you wish?"

"It was another man I saw this morning," I said. "He told me he was the chief, and gave me some detective work to do."

Although extremely puzzled, I hastened to explain the task that had been given me and the discoveries I had made.

"This is very strange," said the chief, equally puzzled. "I have heard nothing of any such plot as you describe, and I feel sure that none of my assistants would dare to usurp my authority in that manner, and especially to place such an important matter as this purports to be in young and inexperienced hands."

"But there is no time to lose, sir," I said, boldly. "The Gadfly may sail at any time now that they have their powder on board."

He stepped to the telephone and spoke.

"Is that Capt. Marden? Has the steam schooner Gadfly sailed? Just left the wharf? Well, I have reason to believe that all is not right on board. Signal the revenue cutter to stop her and send a boat on board. I will come down at once. Good-by."

"Now come with me," said the chief. "We will go on board the Gadfly and see what is wrong there. Afterward I must solve the mystery of the man who sent you on that errand."

But before we quitted the office he telephoned to someone asking if "Robert had come home yet." And I thought he looked very much worried at the answer.

We drove rapidly to the water front. The chief roused the boatman at the boat landing, and in a few minutes we were tossing on the choppy bay in search of the Gadfly. We soon found her in the stream with her engines stopped, and there was some confusion and loud talking.

We climbed on board, where we found an officer and a boat's crew from the revenue cutter, surrounded by a crowd of the passengers and crew. The chief, in an undertone, soon explained to the lieutenant the suspicious circumstances in regard to the vessel.

"Captain," said the lieutenant, turning suddenly to the master of the Gadfly, "let us take a look at those 30 barrels."

The captain was very reluctant, but he had to accompany the lieutenant below, where it was soon discovered that the 30 barrels contained whisky instead of gunpowder.

It is against the federal law to take intoxicating liquors into Alaska, and as the Gadfly was bound for that territory it was evident that an infraction of the law was intended. So the 30 barrels were hoisted out into boats and taken ashore, much to the disgust of the owners, who had counted on realizing a huge profit. As there proved to be nothing to support a suspicion of piracy, the Gadfly was permitted to go on her way.

But just as we were about to leave the schooner the big black dog that I had seen following the young fellow sprang up from below and leaped upon the chief with great joy.

"Carlo!" cried the chief, in a tone of amazement. "How did this dog come on board?" he demanded.

"He came with a young fellow—one of the passengers," replied the captain.

"Where is he? Bring him here at once," said the chief, sternly.

The young passenger had disappeared, but in a few minutes he was brought up from below, much against his will, and taken before the chief.

"Why, Robert!" said the chief. It was all he said, but the tone was full of grief and reproach.

It seemed that Robert was a runaway. His baggage and numerous weapons were hoisted out, and he and Carlo returned with us in the boat.

We all went back to the chief's office. As we entered I saw there the man who had employed me that morning.

"There, sir! There is the man—the other chief."

It seemed to be the chief's fate to be astonished that night.

"What! Kenny!" he exclaimed. "Did you call yourself the chief and employ this boy this morning?" he asked, severely.

"Sure, 'twas only a joke, sir," replied Kenny. "Ain't I the chief of the janitors?"

"You'll not remain chief of the janitors very long if this happens again," returned the chief, sharply.

Kenny skulked out, glad to escape so easily. Then the chief and his son retired to an inner office, where I suppose there was a serious conversation.

After some time the chief came out and sat down at his desk.

"My boy," he said, kindly, "you have done a great deal of good to-day. You have enabled me to rescue my only son from a dangerous expedition for which he was ill prepared. And you have prevented from entering Alaska 30 barrels of whisky, which, dealt out to the Indians of that region, would have done far more damage than 30 barrels of gunpowder. I shall make you a suitable reward."

But at that moment the door opened and a deep voice said: "I wish to see the chief."

I rose, with my heart in my mouth, and looked in my father's worn and anxious face. He had come from our home in a distant city to that detective agency to enlist aid in searching for his truant son, for—I confess it with shame—I, too, was a runaway.—Boston Globe.

Gone Beyond It.

May—Belle looks older since she was married.

Pamela—Yes; she has taken the limit off her age.—Judge.

A HISTORIC CORNER.

Occupied Once by Washington's Best Known Hotel.

In One of Its Rooms Andrew Johnson Took the Oath of Office as President of the United States.

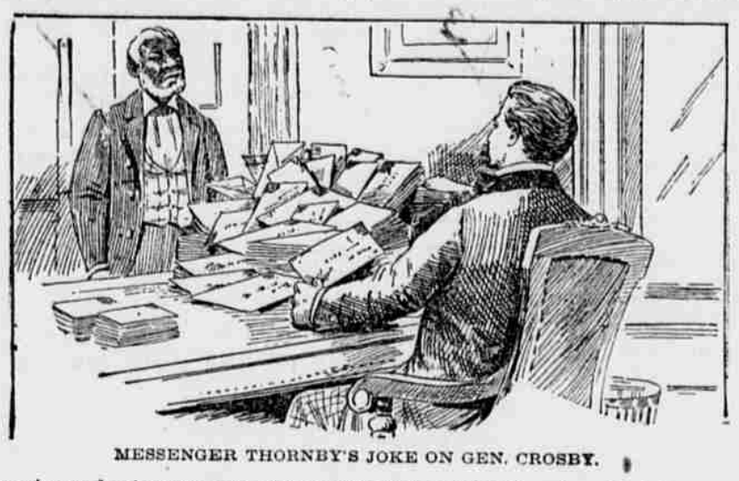
[Special Washington Letter.]

THERE is a historic corner on Pennsylvania avenue which is now occupied by a hotel; and very few people now living know anything about the history of the locality.

For many years the building on the corner of Twelfth street and Pennsylvania avenue was occupied by the pension office, and then a dry goods and notions store built up a successful business there. Six years ago alterations were made which transformed the building into a hotel and cafe and now additions have been built along Twelfth street, completely obliterating all of the landmarks which were so dear to us old-timers.

Nearly 20 years ago "Boss" Shepherd, the man of energy and executive ability who changed the national capital from its condition of a sluggard southern town in a mudhole to a national city with broad avenues and concreted streets, built upon the corner referred to a six-story brick building, with mansard roof, and rented it to the government for the use of the pension office. It was so occupied until the architectural monstrosity in Judiciary square was completed, in 1885, and then the pension office was removed and the Shepherd building was taken by a prosperous storekeeper.

During the civil war the corner was occupied by the best known and most popular hotel in the city, called the Kirkwood house. Members of the cabinet as well as prominent senators and representatives resided at the Kirkwood house, and prominent officers of the federal armies were constantly



MESSENGER THORNBY'S JOKE ON GEN. CROSBY.

coming and going as guests of the same hotel. Vice President Andrew Johnson was a guest of the Kirkwood house on the night of the tragedy at Ford's theater, when President Lincoln lost his life by the hand of an assassin. On the following morning it was in the Kirkwood house that Mr. Johnson took the oath of office and became president of the United States.

In the spring of 1864, when the successful general of the Mississippi valley, U. S. Grant, came to the national capital to receive from the hands of the president his commission as lieutenant general of all the armies he was a guest at the Kirkwood house. From time to time Gens. Sherman, Sheridan, Hancock, Logan, Meade and other eminent military men either had their rooms or took their meals at the Kirkwood house. It was not until several years after the war had closed, when the armies had been disbanded, the carpet-bag period had passed, and the unusual business incident to and dependent upon the civil war had ceased, that the Kirkwood house, being no longer the most popular hostelrie in the city, was closed.

During the latter part of March, 1864, while he was planning the offensive campaign which commenced with the battle of the Wilderness on the 5th day of the following May, a banquet was given to Gen. Grant in the Kirkwood house, which was followed by a ball, and in the festivities of both events Miss Kate Chase, the accomplished, brilliant and beautiful daughter of Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, was the social leader. Although the celebrated hostelrie was a frame building of the olden style, it was an exceptionally large and roomy structure for those days. More than 200 men and women of distinction participated in the banquet, and, before the dawn of the morrow had dispersed the merry-makers, nearly 1,000 of the men and women of note in those days participated in the terpsichorean mazes.

For many years the best servant in the old Kirkwood house was a colored man named George Thornby. He acted as valet to Gen. Grant on that occasion and was subsequently detailed to look after the comfort of Vice President Johnson. So it happened that when the old house finally gave way to a more modern structure, Thornby, through the kind intercession of many men of prominence whom he had served, secured an appointment as messenger in the post office department, when Congressman Tyner, of Indiana, was made postmaster general. He remained there until a few years ago, when he died. Thornby was a very intelligent fellow and was made mail messenger to the first assistant postmaster general. During his latter years he took a great deal of pleasure in telling a story concerning John Schuyler Crosby, of New York, who was the governor of the territory of Montana for three years and became first assistant postmaster general when Frank Hatton was advanced to the position of postmaster general. Thornby opened all the envelopes and laid the smaller ones, which ostensibly contained personal letters, upon the desk of the first assistant postmaster general; but the big official envelopes he distributed to the clerks in charge of the appointments in the different states, and he always did his work intelligently and with good judgment.

Gov. Crosby had only been the incumbent of the office of first assistant postmaster general a few days when he rung his bell, to which Thornby responded, and Gov. Crosby said:

"I want to know who it is that opens my letters every day before they are placed on my desk."

"That is my work, sir," said Thornby, bowing and smiling as one who knows his duty is well performed.

"Well, hereafter," said Gov. Crosby, "I do not want anybody to open my mail. Let the mail be placed upon my desk and I will open it myself. I do not wish to have my correspondence handled in this indiscriminate manner."

On the following morning, when Crosby entered his office he was amazed to see it transformed into a general delivery office and mail packing establishment. His desk was stacked three feet high with letters of every description, not one of which Thornby had opened. In a little space upon the desk before Crosby's chair were 150 or 200 small envelopes containing letters which might be presumed to be personal, but at least three-fourths of which must have been official.

Gov. Crosby was no fool. He simply lacked executive departmental experience. He saw at once that the colored man had a huge joke on him. He rang the bell, and when the polite Thornby appeared, he said: "Thornby, here is a five-dollar bill which belongs to you. Take all of this stuff off of my desk and say nothing about it to anybody."

The faithful and intelligent negro did as requested. But the clerks, who had been waiting for their daily work more than two hours that morning, had ascertained the fact that all of their mail was piled upon Crosby's desk, so that Thornby violated no confidence later when he told the story with many a hilarious smile.

The old Kirkwood house is merely a reminiscence in the national capital. Its disappearance was voluminously commented upon when it was obliterated; and the story of the old hotel is brought vividly to memory by reason of the fact that another old hotel, within a block of the treasury building, has been torn down this summer in order to make room for an immense modern structure.

The old hotel was originally built in 1836, for the use of the post office department. Within five years the Doric columns of the new post office department were erected, and the postmaster general took possession thereof. Then it was that the hotel was opened. It has been known by name to all who have visited the national capital during the past 60 years. It was what the proprietor hoped it would be, as he expressed it with his New England nasal twang, "a very likely tavern." The hotel which will take its place will be a credit to this great and growing city.

The department of justice is in temporary quarters because its historic building, opposite the treasury department, has been torn down this summer, to make room for another, a bigger and better building. The old Corcoran art gallery is about to be taken down, in order to make room for a hall of records of the executive departments.

These are only a few of the improvements which are being made upon Pennsylvania avenue; and they have come none too soon. The principal thoroughfare of the national capital has long been regarded as the best parade ground in the world; but the buildings along that thoroughfare have never reflected credit upon the city, nor upon the people of the republic. The improvements briefly outlined here really constitute a great stride in the development of the national capital as a modern city.

SMITH D. FRY.

Perfect.

"I wish I were nearer perfection," I said,
As I sat on the sofa with her;
The lamp threw a halo of gold o'er her head,
Her breath was like orris and myrrh.

That's easy," she said, with a smile in her eye,
A trick she had gathered from Venus;
And then, with a laugh and a fluttering sigh,
She cast out the pillow between us.
—Puck.

No Ague Left.

Boarder—I hear that there used to be a great deal of fever and ague around here.

Host—Yes; but none here now, not a bit. We've all got acclimated.—N. Y. Weekly.

Bores Even Himself.

Belle—Is Chappie tiresome?

Flora—Is he? Why, they say he yawns incessantly when he's alone.—The Smart Set.

YOUNG DEER HUNTER.

Six-Year-Old California Boy Performs Some Wonderful Feats with His Little Gun.

There is a six-year-old slayer of wild game in California. His name is Austin Otis, and he can bring down a deer with as clean and pretty a shot as any veteran hunter in the country. His home is in the wooded hills, about 15 miles back of Cazadero. He has lived among these hills all his life.

Until the other day Austin had bagged no game larger than rabbits and squirrels. Now, however, he is the most-talked-of youngster in the country, for around Cazadero are some of the finest shots in all the state. Having been refused permission to join a hunting party with his father, he shouldered his gun and started by himself down the creek. He tells of his adventure this way:

"I was wishing awful hard that I could see a deer," he said, "when all of a sudden, after I had gone about 300 yards along the creek, what should I see but a beauty of a deer with its nose to the stream, taking a drink. I followed the creek on purpose, 'cause I knew that deer always come down toward night to drink, but I could hardly believe that my wish had come true so quick.

"I stopped short and looked at him. I thought sure he would jump into the bush before I could take aim, but he didn't seem to hear me. Pup, my dog, understood just the same as if he was a man, instead of a dog, and stood still, except that he wagged his tail. I guess Pup was as excited as I was, but he had sense and didn't spoil things by barking.

"I lifted my rifle, but my hand and arm shook and I couldn't seem to lift straight at all. I was pretty much scared that the deer would get away, so I lifted the gun again and took aim.

YOUNGEST DEER HUNTER.

I remembered what papa always said about holding the sight on the point of the deer's shoulder.

"Then I fired. The deer gave an awful big leap in the air, then ran. I guess he ran about 40 jumps down the creek. My, you ought to have seen Pup run after him! I didn't know I had shot him until Pup caught up with him and he dropped. I ran as fast as ever I could and when I saw he was dead I cut his throat, 'cause that's the way all hunters do.

"I like deer hunting. A fellow doesn't want to kill quail and rabbits and bluejays and gophers and chipmunks all the time. If you're deer hunting you ought to shoot through the heart. It brings the game down quicker and it doesn't hurt so much. That's what papa says, and he knows."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

SOME DEADLY SNAKES.

United States Harbors Four Kinds of Rattlers and Three Other Venomous Serpents.

In the United States there are four different species of rattlesnake—the ground or black rattlesnake, the Florida species, the mountain serpent, and that of the Staked Plains. The rattlesnake found east of the Mississippi, and in the wooded district just west of that river, is essentially the same as the Florida species, although sometimes classed as a separate variety.

Of all these the Staked Plains rattlesnake is the largest, most active and most dangerous. Six feet is not an unusual length, while seven-foot snakes have on several occasions been killed. These serpents measure sometimes ten inches around the body, and recoteeies from their venom are very rare.

The Florida rattlesnake comes next in size, while the short, stumpy ground snake, scarcely ever more than three feet long, is the least venomous.

Besides the rattlesnake there are three other venomous serpents found in this country—the copperhead, the moccasin, land and water, and a small and very rare snake found in Arizona, which is considered the most deadly of all.

This snake lies in the dust, and strikes like a flash of lightning at everything that approaches. A peculiar fact about this snake is that it is nearly completely blind, and has the keenest hearing of any snake known. These reptiles are very rare, and but half a dozen specimens are found in any of our museums.

Short Fare.

Old Lady—Just think, only one missionary for 10,000 cannibals!

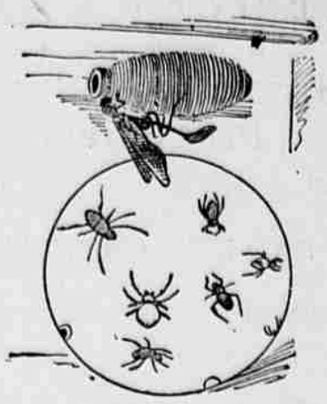
Young Lady—Dear me! They must have very small appetites or very big missionaries!—Woman's Journal.

THE BUSY MUD WASP.

How He Builds His Pot-Like Home and Takes Care of Madam and Her Little Ones.

Here is one of the oldest and most curious potters in the world—the mud wasp. Just at this season he is very busy making tiny jugs in the corner of rooms and on the rafters of barns and outhouses. He is a very busy fellow and carries many loads of his pottery material in a day, preparing after a recipe of his own, and adding to it his little juglike nest.

This is but one of his curious trades, though. He is also a butcher. As the construction of the nest goes on he hunts spiders—brown and green, yellow and black, spiders of all sizes—and stings them to death. Then his wife, Mrs. Potter, lays an egg upon the fat body of each stark little fly-catcher, and Mr. Potter seals him up in his jug. By and by, after the sun has dried the



THE MUD WASP AT HOME.

gray nest, a family of young mud wasps hatch out and fall to eating their first meal, each devouring the spider provided for him by his farsighted parents. Possibly baby quarrels take place in the little jug then, for some of the spiders are smaller than others, and one can easily fancy a hungry little Potter seizing a leg of spider that does not belong to him.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Potter have formidable stings, but they are a good-natured, tolerant couple, and do not resent visits from sightseers provided they themselves are not molested. They gather earth from the edges of puddles and ponds, molding the moist building material very rapidly.

The nest from which our drawing was made hung in a country boy's bedroom. The potter had nearly finished it, working briskly for several days, carrying loads of earth in through an open window. The country boy watched the operation with great interest, and Mr. Potter seemed to like the supervision, flying close to the boy's head and even lighting upon his jacket, never stinging him. One morning he flew away for another load and never returned. Possibly some boy who knew nothing of wasps killed him. The little jug was taken down and after our artist had made the picture it was broken open. Inside the little walls were the dead bodies of 23 spiders.—Chicago Record.

HORSE COULD COUNT.

Understood the Meaning of a Fire Alarm as Well as Any Member of the Department.

"If there is any animal that knows more than a horse," remarked a member of the fire department the other day, "I'd like to see it. I mean one that knows more than a smart horse, for there are fool horses as well as fool people, and once in awhile we get one of these fool horses in the fire department. But I will say that our horses as a rule are pretty smart and knowing.

"I remember one we had in this company some years ago that actually could count. George was his name, if I remember rightly, and George was one of those horses that never did any more work than they were obliged to. Not that he couldn't, but just because, like some people you run across, he was opposed to looking for work. Well, every company in the fire department has a certain district to cover on first alarms. Well, sir, we didn't have George many months before that horse came to know our district just as well as any of the men. He knew the boxes we went out to on the first alarm, and it is a fact that that horse got so that he'd wait and count the first round before he'd budge out of his stall. If the box was not in our district George would walk leisurely to his place, but if it was one we were due at on the first alarm he would rush down to his place. In those days we had to hitch up on every alarm that came in, whether it was in our district or not, and stand hitched for 15 or 20 minutes. George knew this, of course, and that was why he'd always take his time going to his place when the box wasn't in our district. And it is a fact that if he was eating when an outside box came in he'd just keep on eating until the foreman yelled out to bring him down to his place.

"Of course, now and then George would miscount the box and rush to his place on a box not in our district. But when he did make a mistake like that, which was precious seldom, that horse would get so mad and feel so bad about it that he wouldn't get over it in a day or so."—Washington Star.

An Instance of Heredity.

Mabel, aged five, while visiting her aunt in a low, marshy part of the country, contracted malaria, and was quite ill on reaching home. Not long afterward her mother had a chill. "I can't understand why you should have symptoms of malaria, living on such high ground," said the doctor. "Oh," spoke up Mabel, "I guess mamma must have inherited it from me!"